

SECTION ONE: EXPLORE CORE IDEAS

by Robin Frederick

LISTEN TO THE HITS: CORE IDEAS

From this list of songs, choose at least five songs and listen to them. I recommend printing out the lyrics for the songs you choose so you can make notes. You can find lyrics online or take them down by ear. After you listen, answer the questions that follow the list. There are no right or wrong answers. What's important is what you hear and what interests you.

These songs are sorted by genre, but feel free to dip into all of them. You might find a great core idea in a genre you would never think of writing in.

SONG LIST: CORE IDEAS

POP

- “Firework” - Katy Perry
- “Slow Dancing In a Burning Room” - John Mayer
- “Unwritten” - Natasha Bedingfield
- “Say you Won’t Let Go” - James Arthur
- “Brighter Than the Sun” - Colbie Caillat
- “Someone Like You” - Adele
- “How Far We’ve Come” - Matchbox Twenty
- “I Know What You Did Last Summer” - Shawn Mendes
- “Royals” - Lorde
- “Grenade” - Bruno Mars
- “Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic” - The Police

COUNTRY

- “Cowboys and Angels” - Dustin Lynch
- “Tattoos On This Town” - Jason Aldean
- “I Drive Your Truck” - Lee Brice
- “Body Like a Backroad” - Sam Hunt
- “Blue Ain’t Your Color” - Keith Urban
- “Highway Don’t Care” - Tim McGraw

DANCE & DANCE/POP

- “Born This Way” - Lady Gaga
- “OK” - Robin Schultz, James Blunt
- “Hot2Touch” - Felix Jaehn
- “First Time” - Kygo feat. Ellie Goulding

ROCK

- “Help” - Papa Roach
- “Back From the Dead” - Skillet
- “It’s Not My Time” - 3 Doors Down

R&B

- “If I Were a Boy” - Beyoncé
- “Good Life” - Kehlani
- “Stay” - Zedd feat. Alessia Cara
- “That’s What I Like” - Bruno Mars

INDIE FOLK

- “Gone Gone Gone” - Phillip Phillips
- “I Will Wait” - Mumford & Sons
- “Way Down We Go” - Kaleo
- “Ends of the Earth” - Lord Huron

FILM & TV (Singer-songwriter)

- “All We Are” – Matt Nathanson
- “Reasons to Love You” - Meiko
- “Can’t Go Back Now” – The Weepies
- “Keep Breathing” – Ingrid Michaelson
- “Beautiful Day” – Joshua Radin
- “Apologize” - OneRepublic

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. What do you think is the core idea of the song? Try to sum it up in a single phrase.
2. How is the core idea expressed in each section of the lyric?
3. Can you relate to the core idea as a listener? Is it an experience you've had or one you can identify with?
4. In your opinion which lyric lines express the core idea best?

TRY IT NOW

Pick a song from the song list with a core idea that interests you. Replace some of the lyric lines in the song with lines of your own that express the core idea. Add more lines of your own, replacing as many lines as you can. Put the original hit song aside and look at the lyric you've written. If you like it, work on it some more, or keep it to come back to later.

OPTIONAL: Take a moment to watch this short video in which Sting talks about starting his songs with a core idea.

STING VIDEO ON YOUTUBE:

<https://youtu.be/P5C7d8DM9Pc?t=36s>